

GROOM YOUR PET FOR SUCCESS

Pet owners can learn a lot and bond closely with their pets by having regularly scheduled "groom sessions". Frequent grooming teaches you what is normal for your pet and catches problems such as ear infections, tumors, skin diseases, wounds, parasites, bruises and even dental problems before they become serious. Both dogs and cats enjoy regular brushing leading to more interaction with their owners. Young puppies and kittens bond closer to their owners. Older pets become more playful and feel better.

Set a routine and make it a fun time for the pet by including treats. Do things the same way each time. I recommend starting at the nose and rubbing your hands all over the body until you come to the tail. This gives you the opportunity to examine the mouth, eyes, ears, feet, between the toes and footpads, the joints of the legs, under the arms, across the sides and back, and under and along the tail. Using your hands like a massage is enjoyable for the pet and helps to develop trust. With puppies and kittens it teaches them that you are allowed to touch them anywhere. That comes in handy when they are full-grown and need a nail trim or ear cleaning.

Next, use a soft bristled brush and gently groom the hair in long rhythmic strokes. This removes dead hair, dirt, skin flakes and tangles while spreading the natural skin oils throughout the hair coat. Long-haired animals may need to be brushed in layers to prevent pulling and tugging. Remember to groom all areas including the head, neck and under the stomach. Remove dried discharge from around the eyes and nose. Clean the ears with a veterinarian approved cleaner and cotton balls at least once a week. This is a good time to brush your pet's teeth using your finger and a gauze pad. Periodically trimming the toenails is a good idea as well.

The best thing is to start slowly and gradually work up to all of

the things that I have mentioned. Short-haired animals can be done twice a week. Longer-haired animals benefit from four or more times a week. Overweight cats need daily brushing because they cannot reach all areas to groom themselves. Just spending time with your pet and putting your hands on them is a great way for you to relax and make them happy. Brushing will come soon thereafter and then you can have your veterinarian teach you how to clean ears, brush teeth and trim nails. Start now and you will not only get to know your pets better, but you will be helping them to look and feel their best!